

Though the intent of HB 6430 is to protect children I fear that this bill will once again lead parents to a false sense of security. Approximately 200 sex offenders are added to the Michigan registry each month. If the names are being added they must be new offenders so it is obvious that current laws are not protecting anyone. After all the hype about My Space, I went to the internet site. I did not go into the individual sites, but I scanned through a list of the groups. I have enclosed a category list of the groups, along with just a few of the individual groups within the category Romance and Relationships. I find it appalling that these web sites are available to children 14 years of age. If children go into these sites how can you look at it as they are being preyed upon when it is they who are looking where they shouldn't be.

I ask you, How will this bill be enforced? Will it be another restriction that will, once again, involve the rest of the offender's household as well since most households have only one computer? I use the internet frequently, looking for any information that I might be able to use to help get my son removed from the registry. I visit support groups for emotional support. College classes are offered on-line and have student chat rooms to use for study guides. Will the offender be denied access to these as well? Will offenders be allowed to work at home on computer generated jobs?

I cannot speak for all sex offenders on the list as each has their own story. I do speak on behalf of my son. We have an even greater dilemma than internet predators. Silent predators if you will. Ones that lie about their age to the unsuspecting older teen and fall under the term "victim". Young ladies that willingly consent then lie when they are caught. Children becoming sexually active as young as 11. Someone ending up on the registry merely because they were the oldest of the pair. No coercion, stalking, prepping or violence involved. I only bring this up because we are wasting valuable time here in regards to youthful offenders. Time and money would be better spent in educating parents on how to be more vigilant. Encouraging them to be more attentive and involved in their children's lives. Children need supervision from parents not friendship as they have friends. Laws are just letters on a page if parents do nothing to get their children in off the streets or allow them to date or hang out with older teens. We have spent millions on educating children about safe sex, giving them birth control with no minimum age requirement and then turn around and prosecute the older child for a csc crime. On the evening news recently I heard that the Health dept. wants parents to give the HPV vaccination to young girls. I did not catch the whole thing but the mother of a twelve-year-old said she was going to refuse. It seems to me that they too realize children are having sex. Please keep in mind when looking into any individual cases that there are more facts involved than what you see in a police investigation report. It is not always the victim in a case that does the suffering. There are cases where the victim may have been the initiator. I truly understand the pain and suffering of a true victim as my family and I have lived with this pain. My son was 17 and immature when a young, lady whose body and sexual appetite had developed way beyond her reasoning, told my son she was 16. I too live with nightmares and many sleepless nights. My son battled suicidal thoughts as his hopes and dreams were destroyed. He is now 21 unable to find a job. We live in fear that he might unknowingly violate one of the registration requirements since they are forever changing. My son was victimized by fraud and deception yet was given no rights as a victim. Where is his representation by elected officials? It is wrong to have sex with an under age child but by the same token does it give that same under age person the right to lie to one person after another leaving a trail of potential sex offenders behind without even the slightest bit of remorse for the devastation done to all of our lives. Although I am angry with the young girl in my son's case my heart aches for her because all she wants is love and attention and has learned from somewhere that her body can get that for her.

Her reasoning skills have not matured to the point yet where she will know it is not the kind of attention she wants or needs.

I have given you a packet of papers along with a copy of my testimony. They do not directly deal with this bill but out of concern for all youth, especially our young males, I hope that you will read them and realize we are not stopping young children from becoming sexually active by making more laws. We are merely creating a generation of sex offenders. We must act quickly and investigate how we can work together as a team to reverse the sexual trend that our generation put in motion. Do not be so foolish to think that your child or grand child could not be taken in by someone lying about their age and end up being listed as a sex offender.

Thank -You
Cynthia Russell
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Standish, Mi 48658
989-846-4329

Groups Home

Groups Home

My Groups

Create Group

Search Groups

Groups by Category

Activities (7 groups)
Automotive (2 groups)
Business & Entrepreneurs (0 groups)
Cities & Neighborhoods (10064 groups)
Companies / Co-workers (6968 groups)
Computers & Internet (3596 groups)
Countries & Regional (3888 groups)
Cultures & Community (17791 groups)
Entertainment (28028 groups)
Family & Home (5744 groups)
Fan Clubs (49400 groups)
Fashion & Style (16905 groups)
Film & Television (14601 groups)
Food, Drink & Wine (11219 groups)
Games (10815 groups)
Gay, Lesbian & Bi (10205 groups)
Government & Politics (7445 groups)

Health, Wellness, Fitness (4454 groups)
Hobbies & Crafts (6379 groups)
Literature & Arts (7889 groups)
Money & Investing (1329 groups)
Music (98982 groups)
Nightlife & Clubs (15158 groups)
Non-Profit & Philanthropic (4289 groups)
Other (412540 groups)
Pets & Animals (8743 groups)
Places & Travel (5163 groups)
Professional Organizations (10273 groups)
Recreation & Sports (31946 groups)
Religion & Beliefs (24185 groups)
Romance & Relationships (22123 groups)
Schools & Alumni (48849 groups)
Science & History (2228 groups)
Sorority/Fraternities (7888 groups)

Create a Group

Keyword

Search

Advanced Search

Most Popular Groups

members

make out club	(public)	107,753
simply romance	(public)	19,220
The Kissing Bandits	(private)	5,309
sex appeal !!!	(public)	4,848
free live cams	(public)	4,575
I want to fuck Dan Clark	(public)	2,873
Vote 4 the sexiest people on MySpace	(public)	2,851
Pretty-angel sexy webcam show	(public)	new
Grace ↓	(public)	new
(about young men & women who are trying to get more attention from their lovers, by finding what they can do to improve their relationship & sex life)		
Rocco loves the cock	(public)	new

News & Noteworthy © — Special Report: 3-5-06

The Policy of Youthful Behaviors:

Ninth to Twelfth grade behaviors that may label juveniles a sex offender under today's laws!

Over the past few years lawmakers have been proposing legislation to "get tough on sex offenders," a hot topic, with several laws affecting juvenile offenders. Lawmakers have not had an overwhelming amount of data to guide their proposals concerning juvenile sexual behaviors. Occasionally a caring parent may testify about the impact of legislation on their child, and mention that the conduct was consensual or that the other party lied about their age. We also hear about Romeo and Juliet cases although how many are unknown but they do exist. The impact of recent laws have been a tragedy to the lives of young offenders and their families, often for the rest of their lives.

Today we have assembled data into a single chart that will allow lawmakers to see the juvenile population already engaging in sexual behaviors. I wonder what lawmakers would do if they realized their proposed laws could affect 50% of the juvenile population in schools today? Would they look closer, would they make other suggestions, rather than simply criminalize all such juvenile conduct? There are other ways to handle youthful behaviors. The benchmark should not be laws that make sex offenders and predators out of school children. The policy surrounding youthful behaviors appears to have emanated from the frenzy affixed to the broad term, sex offenders.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC), in 1991, developed the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) to monitor six categories of priority health-risk behaviors among youth. These categories contribute significantly to the leading causes of death, disability, and social problems among youth and adults in the United States. The CDC focused on the health of youth. Through a survey the CDC gathered facts and compiled them into the YRBSS report. Within that survey are questions related to the sexual behaviors of youths. That data is relevant to lawmakers today and we have compiled it into a chart.

Today our chart, "The Policy of Youthful Behaviors: Ninth to Twelfth grade behaviors that may label juveniles a sex offender under today's laws!" extrapolates all the questions and data related to sexual behaviors of youths from the YRBSS survey. Given the 2003 YRBSS is representative of a smaller juvenile population of the nation, but a significant one, we have matched the YRBSS results to the 2004 U.S. Census Bureau numbers for School Enrollment, 9-12th Grades. The resulting numbers of youths should stagger lawmakers. **Almost FIFTY PERCENT!** The youths engaged in sexual behaviors number in the millions. These youths are the future of our society today.

Given that juveniles had self-reported their behaviors we wondered about the accuracy of the survey. The survey began in 1991 and is biennial, the CDC asked each sexual behavior questions in all surveys, so we

averaged the male and female response percentages over the seven surveys (see chart right-most column). Certainly the juveniles answering the first surveys had cycled out of later surveys, and what we found is, percentages over the seven surveys are level and virtually the same as the most recent survey. To us that meant the trends represented by the questions were actually happening and reasonably reported.

The CDC has chronicled millions of students engaging in sexual behaviors. Are these all to be tomorrow's registered predatory sex offenders?

News & Noteworthy

To link back to this chart: <http://www.geocities.com/voicism/index-charts.html#chtz>

The Policy of Youthful Behaviors:

Ninth to Twelfth grade behaviors that may label juveniles a sex offender under today's laws!

Youth Behaviors, 9th to 12th Grades			2003 YRBSS Survey Results		Averages of All YRBSS Surveys		
Sexual behavior survey questions:	Female	Male	Total	No. Of Youths †	Female	Male	No. of Surveys
Ever had sexual intercourse:	45.3%	48.0%	46.7%	7.754M	48.1%	52.1%	7*
Sexually active within 3-months of survey:	34.6%	33.8%	34.3%	5.695M	36.7%	35.2%	7*
Of students who had sexual intercourse within 3-months of survey, the percentage who drank alcohol or used drugs before last sexual intercourse:	21.0%	29.8%	25.4%	4.217M	18.4%	29.6%	7*
Had 4 or more sex partners during lifetime:	11.2%	17.5%	14.4%	2.391M	13.3%	19.7%**	7*
Had first sexual intercourse before age 13:	4.2%	10.4%	7.4%	1.228M	4.5%	11.7%	7*
Had been pregnant or gotten someone pregnant one or more times:	4.9%	3.5%	4.2%	.697M	7.0%	4.8%***	7*
Forced to have sexual intercourse:	11.9%	6.1%	9.0%	1.494M	11.1%	5.6%	01, 03
Drug and Alcohol survey questions:							
Had one drink of alcohol on one or more days during lifetime:	44.9%	43.8%	44.9%	.	79.3%	79.5%	7*
Used marijuana one or more times during lifetime:	37.6%	42.7%	40.2%	.	37.1%	43.7%	7*
Used ecstasy (also called MDMA):	11.6%	10.4%	11.1%	.			03
Used any form of cocaine, powder, crack, freebase one or more times during lifetime:	7.7%	9.5%	8.7%	.	6.5%	8.7%	7*
Sniffed glue, breathed spray cans, or inhaled paints or sprays to get high one or more times during lifetime:	3.4%	4.3%	3.9%	.	14.7%	16.3%	95, 97, 99, 01, 03
Used heroin one or more times during lifetime:	2.0%	4.3%	3.3%	.	1.93%	3.9%	99, 01, 03
Used methamphetamines one or more times during lifetime:	6.8%	8.3%	7.6%	.	8.1%	9.6%	99, 01, 03
Students who had at least one drink of alcohol ON SCHOOL PROPERTY on one or more of the past 30 days:	4.2%	6.0%	5.2%	.	4.1%	6.5%	93, 95, 97, 99, 01, 03

Students who used marijuana ON SCHOOL PROPERTY one or more times during the past 30 days:	3.7%	7.6%	5.8%	4.1%	9.1%	93, 95, 97, 99, 01, 03
Students who were offered, sold, or given an illegal drug ON SCHOOL PROPERTY during past 12 months:	25.0%	31.9%	28.7%	23.7%	34.3%	93, 95, 97, 99, 01, 03

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) developed the **Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS)** to monitor six categories of priority health risk behaviors among youth. Of the six categories two are relevant to our chart, sexual behaviors and alcohol (and other drug) use. These behaviors contribute markedly to the leading causes of death, disability, and social problems among youth and adults in the United States. YRBSS includes a national school-based survey conducted by CDC as well as state, territorial, and local school-based surveys conducted by education and health agencies. In these surveys, conducted biennially since 1991, representative samples of students in grades 9-12 are drawn. In 2003, a total of 15,214 students completed the national survey and 32 states and 20 school districts also obtained data representative of their jurisdiction. See the **Survey Participation Map** for an explanation of the weighted and unweighted state results. **2003 Survey questions and data.** (Scroll down to United States High School Survey (code book)). **2003 CDC Press Release** and **YRBSS Methodology.** **The next survey 2005. Survey Questions.**

t: No. of Youths, equating the 2003 Survey percentages (ex: 46.7% weighted) to the national **U.S. Census School Enrollment, 2-12th Grades** (2004), shows approximate number of youths (ex 7,754 Million) exhibiting that behavior.

*: Surveys are biennially. 1991, 93, 95, 97, 99, 01, 03. However, not every question was asked in each survey, hence the "Surveys" column.

** : Down from 23.4 (1991) to 17.5 (2003)

***: Down from 5.3 (1991) to 3.6 (2003)

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Link back to chart:

<http://www.geocities.com/voicism/index-charts.html#yrbss>

A special thanks to Citizens for Second Chances for helping in the preparation of this chart.

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Raunchy lyrics affect sex choices, study finds

The music's influence on teenagers' behavior appears to depend on how men, women and sex are portrayed.

Lindsey Tanner, Associated Press

CHICAGO - Teens whose iPods are full of music with raunchy, sexual lyrics start having sex sooner than those who prefer other songs, a study found.

Whether it's hip-hop, rap, pop or rock, much of popular music aimed at teens contains sexual overtones. Its influence on their behavior appears to depend on how the sex is portrayed, researchers found.

Songs depicting men as "sex-driven studs" and women as sex objects and that include explicit references to sex acts are more likely to trigger early sexual behavior than those where sexual references are more veiled and relationships appear more committed, the study found.

Teens who said they listened to a lot of music with degrading sexual messages were almost twice as likely to start having intercourse or other sexual activities within the following two years as were teens who listened to little or no sexually degrading music.

Among heavy listeners, 51 percent started having sex within two years, versus 29 percent of those who said they listened to little or no sexually degrading music.

Exposure to lots of sexually degrading music "gives them a specific message about sex," said lead author Steven Martino, a researcher for Rand Corp. in Pittsburgh. Boys learn they should be relentless in the pursuit of women, and girls learn to view themselves as sex objects, he said.

"We think that really lowers kids' inhibitions and makes them less thoughtful" about sexual decisions and may influence them to make decisions they regret, he said.

The study, based on telephone interviews with 1,461 participants aged 12 to 17, appears in the August issue of *Pediatrics*, being released today.

Most participants were virgins when they were first questioned in 2001. Follow-up interviews were done in 2002 and 2004 to see if music choice had influenced subsequent behavior.

Martino said the researchers tried to account for other factors that could affect teens' sexual behavior, including parental permissiveness, and still found explicit lyrics had a strong influence. However, Yvonne Fulbright, sex researcher and author from New York, said factors including peer pressure, self-esteem and

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Sex Survey 'Eye-Opening' For Local Parents

By MARILYN BROWN

TAMPA - Many Hillsborough County middle and high school students lead double lives - one for their parents and one for their peers.

In a districtwide survey, nearly half of high school students and one in five middle school students said they have had sexual intercourse, and a higher percentage of high school boys than girls reported being physically hurt by their "significant others."

"We really do not understand what's going on with kids today," Lloyd Zimet, who oversees prevention and wellness programs for Hillsborough schools, told a small group of Parent-Teacher Association parents and grandparents last week.

The spring survey of more than 5,000 randomly selected Hillsborough students revealed other risky behaviors.

Among student-reported activity from four thick survey volumes compiled by the national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- Nearly one-third of high school students said they were propositioned to buy, bought or sold drugs while at school.

- Condom use decreases with age, dropping from 78 percent in eighth grade to 61.4 percent for high school seniors.

- More male high school students - 16 percent - reported being physically hurt by their significant others than female students, at 11.8 percent.

- More than 9 percent of male and nearly 12 percent of female high school students said they were physically forced to have sex.

"I know that is happening, because my son constantly gets letters from girls who want to do sexual things to him," said Paula Thomas, mother of five children ages 9 to 16. "It starts in the sixth or seventh grade."

At school, the Citrus Park mother said, "They know to stay out of certain hallways because of the girls."

Parents at the meeting, who often are involved in schools as PTA board members, said they didn't know about the survey. Had their children been a part of it, Zimet said, they would have been asked to sign permission slips.

"There is no way I'd want [my son] to take that survey if he was in middle school," said Camille Johnston, mother of children ages 7 and 10 who attend Nelson Elementary School in Dover. "But I'd want those results."

Parents need that type of "eye-opening" information, the PTA leaders agreed.

"I'm a pretty involved parent, but I'm pretty ignorant about what the trends are," said Sharold Allen, the county council president who asked Zimet to make the presentation.

"This is so important."

Allen heard Zimet speak about the survey at a recent School Health Advisory Committee meeting and took it to her board of directors.

The information needs to reach more parents, they said.

"Some parents don't want to know all this stuff," said Gayle Mohr, whose son attends King High School in Tampa. "The King High School PTA had someone do a presentation about crime and violence. There were parents there so out of sync with the real world. They're totally flabbergasted when they do find out things."

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey, designed by the CDC, requires a sampling of students from every Hillsborough high school every two years, Zimet said. The district added middle schools on its own. Zimet said the results didn't change significantly from 2003 to 2005. The CDC posts results of participating districts on its Web site, but as of Saturday, the 2005 results weren't available. Information about the survey and past results are at www.cdc.gov/yrbps.

Middle school students were asked 53 questions and high school students were asked 89 - a mix of health and safety questions on topics such as diet and physical activity and sexual behavior.

Zimet, in his post since August, said he wants more parents to consider the survey results and talk to their children. He is willing to meet with any interested group.

"The parents have kind of been left out of the formula," he said. "It's the parents' responsibility to talk to their children, based on their value system."

Pasco and Pinellas counties also survey students on risk behaviors, but they are not the same surveys used for the national report, officials in those counties said. The 2005 results are not yet in for their state reports, officials said.

Parents usually don't see the results because those go to community agencies and committees dealing with such issues.

One Hillsborough PTA board member not shocked at the district's survey results was 89-year-old Bill Monfort, a World War II veteran and a parent of three living children, six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

"I can't say that I'm surprised," Monfort said. "People do a lot of things today that people didn't used to do - and at a younger age."

This story can be found at:

Survey: Many U.S. teens have had oral sex

By THOMAS H. MAUGH

LOS ANGELES TIMES

More than half of American teens age 15 to 19 have engaged in oral sex, increasing to nearly 70 percent for those who are 18 and 19, according to the largest federal study of the nation's sexual practices.

The study also found that 11 percent of women age 18 to 44 reported having at least one homosexual experience in their lifetime, up from 4 percent in the last study conducted in 1992.

Taken together, the two findings suggest a possible shift in sexual practices, in which females are using oral and gay sex "as a safer alternative than (vaginal) sex with men," said epidemiologist William D. Mosher of the National Center for Health Statistics, the study's lead author.

"If it is seen as a safer alternative, it is an interesting response to the campaigns to reduce teen pregnancy and to reduce sexually transmitted diseases and HIV," he said.

The study, however, found that only 9 percent of the teens reported using condoms during oral sex. Studies have shown that gonorrhea, syphilis, herpes and the human papillomavirus can all be transmitted in this manner.

"They have not been given a strong enough message about the health risks of oral sex," said Dr. Claire Brindis of the University of California, San Francisco.

James Wagoner, president of Advocates for Youth, a reproductive health organization in Washington, D.C., said the study showed that society is undergoing a social transition sexually, with women and girls becoming more sexually confident.

"It calls into question the stereotype of boys as hunters and girls as prey. Something going on here is creating more balance between the sexes

James Wagoner, president of Advocates for Youth, a reproductive health organization in Washington, D.C., said the study showed that society is undergoing a social transition sexually, with women and girls becoming more sexually confident. 'It calls into question the stereotype of boys as hunters and girls as prey. Something going on here is creating more balance between the sexes than we have seen before.'

than we have seen before."

But Brindis cautioned that some of the apparent increases may simply represent an increased comfort level in discussing intimate behaviors rather than an actual increase in activity.

Some people may just now "be disclosing information that had probably occurred for decades," she said.

Economist M. V. Lee Badgett, a visiting scholar at UCLA and research director of the Institute for Gay and Lesbian Strategic Studies, echoed that sentiment, noting that "the world has changed in 10 years."

She noted that the 1990 census showed 150,000 same-sex couples in the nation, while the 2000 version found 600,000. In both cases, she said, the differences "are much more likely to be due to a willingness to report than to an increase in numbers."

The study, conducted between March 2002 and March 2003, involved in-home interviews of 12,571 people by trained female interviewers. The most recent study, conducted a decade earlier, involved 3,300 interviews.

The researchers asked a variety of health-related questions. The sex were presented on a computer so that the interviewees could respond while maintaining anonymity.

The exact form of the question itself is also crucial, noted epidemiologist Susan Cochran of UCLA. In the survey, women were asked, "Have you ever had any sexu-

al experience of any kind with another female?" That question can encompass a variety of behaviors ranging from sexual intimacy to cuddling or a kiss, she said.

She cited an Australian study which found that 8.6 percent of women answered affirmatively to a question similar to that on the U.S. survey, but only 5.7 percent did so when the question specifically asked about genital contact.

"What's happening is that our definition of sexual behavior has broadened," she said.

Many of the same arguments can be made about the reports of teen sexual behavior, but most experts agreed that the numbers represent a real phenomenon.

There have been widespread anecdotal reports that teens are increasingly engaging in oral sex to prevent pregnancy and the transmission of sexual diseases, but the new survey is the first to actually document the incidence on a national level, Mosher said.

"It's good to finally have some reliable information on that," he said.

The data show that, among teens ages 15 to 19, 55 percent of males and 54 percent of females reported engaging in oral sex. Among those 18 to 19, the figure grows to about 70 percent for both sexes.

Overall, more teens had oral sex than vaginal sex: 53 percent of girls age 15 to 19 and 49 percent of boys reported that they had had intercourse.

+ [REDACTED]

TEEN girls smoking more

FROM 1A

three decades.

There is no single reason why girls are smoking, drinking and popping pills more than ever. Academics, therapists, teachers and teens themselves report that today's young women live in an increasingly stressful environment; many are worried about their appearance, eager to date older boys or recovering from physical or sexual abuse. Unlike young men, who often use illegal substances for an adrenalin rush, teenage girls use alcohol or drugs to escape.

"Girls want to do what older guys are doing or they want to be cool," said Meghan Ward, 18, a volunteer in the Connecticut community service group Peer Advocates. "Girls do feel a lot of stress - everything from school, to most of us work, we have boyfriends and we want to maintain good friendships. It's hard."

The results came as something of a surprise to John Walters, director of the White House program, since illegal drug use by children ages 12 to 17 has fallen 19 percent in the last 5 years, a statistic touted by President Bush in his recent State of the Union Address.

"We want to make sure we continue the decline and deal effectively with the current circumstance," he said in an interview.

While some progress has been made, the administration statistic misses the fact that the use of alcohol and prescription drugs is rising, said Joseph Califano, chairman of the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University.

"We have not done a good job of keeping alcohol and drugs out of the hands of kids," he said. In Columbia's latest survey, 42 percent of teens reported they would have no trouble purchasing marijuana in a day. "That's 11 million kids."

In 2002, 2003 and 2004, girls exceeded boys as first-time pot smokers, and they far surpass young men when it comes to prescription drug abuse.

for which data is available, 1.5 million girls began drinking, 730,000 started smoking cigarettes and 675,000 began smoking pot.

Califano, who is releasing a book today titled "Women Under the Influence," criticized Bush's proposal to trim drug prevention and treatment programs while increasing law enforcement in those areas.

"The only way to get hooked is to use, so prevention funds are very, very important," he said.

Both Califano and Seigel said adolescent girls develop addictions more easily and are more prone to depression than males. The White House report cited studies that indicate that girls who used marijuana daily were five times more likely to face depression in young adulthood.

In many cases, concerns over weight and self-esteem factor heavily in girls' decisions to smoke or use prescription drugs. Magazines, reality television and movies portray young female celebrities as successful, thin - and drug users, said Jessica Morales, another member of Peer Advocates, noting, "Girls are more vulnerable to those stereotypes."

Girls even face increased pressure from the beverage industry, said Craig Turner, director of youth and social services in Wallingford, Conn. "They've been creating new products specifically geared toward women," he said. "They're called alcopops - fruit-flavored drinks, enhanced lemonades, flavored hard liquors. Where taste alone used to deter kids, they like the taste of these."

Many people complain that parents are neglecting their responsibilities. In his 14 years as a therapist at the Cross Creek Manor specialty boarding school in Utah, Garth Lasater said he has seen "a sharp decline in the family, more and more kids left alone."

In Connecticut, more parents are allowing young people to drink in their homes, as long as they don't drive, said members of Peer Advocates. But as Morales put it: Adults should

Teenage girls beat boys when it comes to smoking and drug use

CACI CONNOLLY

WASHINGTON POST

Teenage girls, having already caught up to their male counterparts in illegal drug use and alcohol consumption, now have the dubious distinction of surpassing boys in smoking and prescription drug abuse the past two years. In fact,

more young women than men started using marijuana, alcohol and cigarettes, according to government findings being released today.

The results are doubly disturbing, researchers say, because they run counter to trends indicating an overall decline in teen drug use and because young women appear

to suffer more serious health consequences as a result.

"It's really sad the girls are winning," said Warren Seigel, chairman of pediatricians at Brooklyn's Coney Island Hospital. "This isn't the game they should be winning at."

Adolescent girls who smoke, drink or take drugs are at higher risk of depression, addiction and stunted growth. And because substance abuse often goes hand-in-hand with risky sexual behavior, they are more likely to contract a sexually transmitted disease or become pregnant, warns the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, which will announce its findings in New York.

The new analysis is based on the 2004 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, which interviewed members of 70,000 households. Conducted annually by the federal government since 1971, the survey is a highly regarded detailed look at adult and teen behaviors over

See TEEN, 2A

Posted on Sun, Aug. 20, 2006

Kids in mirror younger than they appear

LAURA BILLINGS

If she had survived, JonBenet Ramsey would now be 16 years old.

Just 16.

Maybe freshly minted with a new driver's license. Maybe just wrapping up her first summer job. Maybe looking forward to her next year of high school.

The arrest of a new suspect in her sensational murder case has reminded us once again that this girl was really much younger than she looked in the photos we've seen so often in the last decade, the ones with the highlighted hair, and the painted nails, and the powdered face.

It was these images, along with the strange and artificial world of child beauty pageants in which she traveled, that seemed to fuel a kind of whispering campaign against her family that often started with "What kind of parents would allow ...?" and "No daughter of mine ..."

"It's interesting that so much was made at the time about how she looked and how she was dressed," says Cordelia Anderson, a Minneapolis consultant who has served on the board of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

Though the tendency to blame the victim and her family is still strongly rooted in our culture, the sophisticated and sexualized images of children that seemed so suspicious in the initial aftermath of the Ramsey case now seem almost routine.

"What JonBenet's case raised for a lot of people is the idea of children 'aging up,'" says Anderson, the founder and owner of Sensibilities Inc. and an expert on child sexual-abuse prevention. "Youthfulness used to be the 20s, and then it moved down to the late teens, and in the last decade we've seen sex and sex appeal being used to sell things to children."

Advertisers even have an acronym for the trend — KGOY — which stands for "kids getting older younger."

It helps marketers to explain why 3-year-olds are the new target market for Barbie dolls, and why kindergartners consider them "babyish," preferring the midriff-baring Bratz dolls instead.

It helps marketers to understand how to sell cell phones to middle schoolers (nearly half of whom had them in 2004) and the best media buys for reaching boys and girls; 69 percent of kids between 6 and 14 have a television in their bedroom, the Washington Post reported.

But the trend can have some troubling consequences for parents who wish they could make their children's childhoods, and all the innocence that goes with that, last a little longer.

Anderson was giving a talk not long ago when a parent of an 18-month-old complained she was having trouble finding toddler clothing that wasn't an imitation of more adult styles — or worse, adult themes. A new clothing line called "Pimpfant" now features "wife beater" T-shirts for toddlers, while other Internet boutiques offer all-cotton tees that say "Playground Pimp." According to the online catalogue: "Your kid doesn't have to know how to read and write to have skills. He's working his magic during recess behind the jungle gym. Ohh yea."

"The way that we have made the whole pimp and ho lifestyle glamorized hasn't been a good trend," says Anderson. "It leads to a kind of normalization of sexual harm ... where boys get the message that they're supposed to have power over girls, and girls get the message that they're supposed to be sexual objects."

There are some hopeful signs that kids can grow up to reject this kind of marketing. Last year, teenage girls led a boycott against the retailer Abercrombie & Fitch for selling tight T-shirts emblazoned with such offensive lines as "Who needs brains when you have these?" "Anatomy tutor" and "Available for parties."

Though the company eventually retracted the T-shirts from the sales floor, the rules about what young women will tolerate still seem ambiguous. As a recent New York Times story pointed out, "slut" has become a new salutation among teenage girls.

Against such a confusing backdrop, Anderson's advice to parents is to start paying attention to the ways our kids are pushed — or are pushing — beyond the bounds of age-appropriate dress, speech and behavior.

"We have to help people see what's hidden in front of our eyes," she says. "We don't want to buy into what we see happening, and yet we don't want our kids to not fit in. That's how we play into it, without even wanting to."

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Sexy media a siren call to promiscuity?

REUTERS 

By Michael Conlon

Mon Apr 3, 12:01 PM ET

Sexually charged music, magazines, TV and movies push youngsters into intercourse at an earlier age, perhaps by acting as kind of virtual peer that tells them everyone else is doing it, a study said Monday.

"This is the first time we've shown that the more kids are exposed to sex in media the earlier they have sex," said Jane Brown of the University of North Carolina, chief author of the report.

Previous research had been limited to television, said the study which looked at 1,017 adolescents when they were aged 12 to 14 and again two years later. They were checked on their exposure during the two years to 264 items -- movies, TV shows, music and magazines -- which were analyzed for their sexual content.

In general it found that the highest exposure levels led to more sexual activity, with white teens in the group 2.2 times more likely to have had intercourse at ages 14 to 16 than similar youngsters who had the least exposure.

The effect was not as pronounced for blacks, the study said, perhaps because the black youngsters in the study were already more sexually experienced than the whites were when the research began and thus were less influenced by media exposure over the two-year period.

The teenage pregnancy rate in the United States is three to 10 times higher than that found in other industrialized nations, making that and exposure to sexually transmitted infections a major public health concern, the study said.

At the same time parents tend not to talk about sex with their children in a timely and comprehensive way, leaving a vacuum in which the media may become a powerful sex educator, providing "frequent and compelling portraits of sex as fun and risk free."

"Interestingly one of the strongest predictors of risk for early sexual intercourse for both black and white teens (in the study) was the perception that his or her peers were having sex," the report said.

Youngsters "may begin to believe the world view portrayed and may begin to adopt the media's social norms as their own. Some, especially those who have fewer alternative sources of sexual norms, such as parents or friends, may use the media as a kind of sexual superpeer that encourages them to be sexually active," the report added.

The study was published in the April issue of "Pediatrics," the journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics. A portion of the data was previously published in the Journal of Adolescent Health.

The study was done in several schools in North Carolina. The authors said that they did not measure the impact of exposure to sexual material on the Internet because when the research began in 2001 relatively few of the early adolescents in the sample had Internet access.

Additional research should include exposure to Web-based material, the study suggested.

"It took many studies over a number of years to establish that violence in the media increased children's violent behavior and to begin initiatives to reduce harmful effects," the study said.

"Given the consistent findings regarding media violence, it may be prudent not to wait decades to conclude that the media are also important sources of sexual norms for youth," it added.

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From the Baltimore Sun

Oral sex jumps among young

Study in city shows percentage more than doubled from '94 to '04

By Dennis O'Brien
sun reporter

May 10, 2006

Following a national trend, oral sex is on the rise among teens and young adults in Baltimore.

Studies of records from 1994 and 2004 show a sharp increase in the proportion of young patients at the city's two health clinics who reported having oral sex.

Among males ages 12 to 25, the percentage who acknowledged having oral sex jumped from 16 percent to 32 percent over the decade, said Emily Erbeling, a co-author of the report and chief of clinical services in the Baltimore City Health Department's sexually transmitted disease program.

The rate among females of the same age jumped from 14 percent to 38 percent, she said.

As part of the medical histories they provided on their initial visits, patients were asked whether they had engaged in oral sex during the previous 90 days. The questions were asked at the city's eastern clinic in the 600 block of N. Caroline St. and the western facility in the 1500 block of North Ave., Erbeling said.

There were 2,598 first-time patients at the city clinics in 1994 and 6,438 a decade later, an increase Erbeling attributed to the expansion of city medical services.

The study was intended to help physicians stay informed about health issues affecting teenagers, said Dr. Joshua Sharfstein, city health commissioner. "This isn't something that should be thought of as a harmless activity," he said.

The report, released yesterday at a national conference on sexually transmitted diseases in Florida, doesn't discuss reasons for the increase, Erbeling said.

"More research is definitely needed so we can understand teenage choices and teenage behavior better," Erbeling said.

But experts say the increases might stem from a preference for oral sex because it avoids unwanted pregnancies and carries a minimum risk of potentially deadly consequences.

"People have adopted oral sex as a safer form of sex in the age of HIV and AIDS," said Dr. Jeffrey Klausner, director of sexually transmitted disease prevention and control at the San Francisco Department of Health.

In a recent study, Klausner and a team of researchers analyzed the health histories of 239 gay men who engaged in oral sex exclusively over six months. They found that none of the participants had contracted HIV. According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, HIV can be spread orally but only in very rare cases.

"We can't say there's zero risk. But we can say ... the risk is very, very, very low," Klausner said. "Other studies also have found the risk to be very, very low. But unfortunately, we're still faced with case reports from individuals who claim that's the way they were infected."

While it might not spread HIV, oral sex can transmit other diseases, including syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia and herpes, said Dr. Ronald O. Valdiserri, an expert on sexually transmitted diseases and a deputy director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta.

But many teens are ignoring those risks, said Bill Albert, a spokesman for the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

"Maybe we've done a decent job of trying to avoid teen pregnancy, but not avoiding the potential health risks associated with these other activities," Albert said. "There's no question but that among some teenagers, oral sex is not an intimate behavior but a casual way of hooking up with somebody."

More teens are having oral sex than sexual intercourse, studies have shown. A report by the National Center for Health Statistics last year found that 55 percent of all boys ages 15 to 19 and 54 percent of girls the same age acknowledged having oral sex some time in their lives. By comparison, 49 percent of the boys and 53 percent of the girls reported having intercourse.

The National Survey of Family Growth, as it is known, surveyed 2,271 teenagers between March 2002 and February 2003, said William Mosher, the statistician who analyzed the results for the National Center for Health Statistics.

Differences between the city and federal results could be attributed to different age groups being surveyed with a slightly different question, Mosher said. The federal survey asked teens whether they had oral sex anytime in their lives, while the city survey focused on the previous 90 days.

"The results are not inconsistent with each other," he said.

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This article might have implied that HIV, which causes AIDS, could not be spread by oral sex when it was published in the print edition. The Sun regrets the error.

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The National District Attorneys Association
Message From the President Robert M.A. Johnson Robert M.A.
Johnson

Collateral Consequences

In the performance of our duties as prosecutors, should we as prosecutors consider the consequences of the accused outside of the justice system, that are imposed upon conviction as a matter of law?

Increasingly we see situations in which the collateral consequences of a criminal conviction exceed the consequences that are imposed by a judge upon sentencing. You know some of the examples. A foreigner legally in this country for many years, who may be married to a U.S. citizen and/or parent of U.S. citizens, can be deported for relatively minor offenses. In many circumstances, a person who strikes any member of his or her household is technically barred by operation of law from possessing a firearm—forever.

In our traditional criminal justice system, the court sentences offenders to jail or prison terms, a fine, probation and related conditions of probation. When probation is complete, as far as the criminal justice system is concerned, the offender has done the time and paid his or her debt to society.

However, today's offenders learn that they have only begun to suffer the consequences of their convictions after they have satisfied their sentences. State legislators and members of Congress, often motivated by public response to highly publicized cases, have opened the dam on a stream of laws that impose subsequent consequences on those convicted of particular crimes. These collateral consequences are in addition to the sentencing consequences enforced in the courtroom, and, unlike the judicial sentence, they do not consider the circumstances of an individual offender or offense and often they are lifetime consequences. The consequences vary from state to state, but they generally relate to voting, occupational licensing, vehicle licensing, firearm restrictions, offender registration, civil forfeitures and welfare benefits. Federal collateral consequences are much the same as those imposed by state law with the addition of deportation.

Concern about this phenomenon appears on two levels. On a societal level, a problem arises when the degree of these collateral consequences reduces the possibility that convicts can return to be

productive members of our society. In these cases we have effectively created a subclass of citizens who, even after doing what they were ordered to by a judge, are barred from some jobs, unable to drive, disenfranchised from the vote and continually labeled as criminals. To no one's surprise, they may believe they have no recourse but to continue to live outside the law.

On the practical level, as prosecutors, we see the effects of these collateral consequences. When the consequences are significant and out of anyone's control, victims of criminal conduct are less likely to cooperate. Defendants will go to trial more often if the result of a conviction is out of the control of the prosecutor and judge and is disproportionate to the offense and offender. Judges often consider the collateral consequences of a conviction. When the consequences are too severe, many judges change their rulings, sentencing felonies as misdemeanors and expunging records to avoid what they believe to be an unjust result. A judge in my jurisdiction once allowed a felon to withdraw his plea of guilty after he served his prison sentence to avoid a deportation.

Our job, our duty, is to seek justice. (See NDAA National Prosecution Standards 1.1.) How can we ignore a consequence of our prosecution that we know will surely be imposed by the operation of law? These collateral consequences are simply a new form of mandated sentences. Prosecutors have often favored mandated sentences to counter the tendencies of some judges who seem incapable of giving serious consequences for serious crimes. With mandatory sentencing, however, we can still seek justice in how we charge or bargain a particular case. These collateral consequences cannot easily be charged or bargained away when justice requires them. But we must consider them if we are to see that justice is done. This struggle for justice was evident in the mind of a highly respected district attorney in a major jurisdiction when he shared his agony in deciding the fate of a father who abused his child. This father, after all, would be deported upon conviction, destroying a family that the district attorney and the victim's family thought could be saved.

The efforts of prosecutors and judges do not fully deal with the problem. At times, the collateral consequences of a conviction are so severe that we are unable to deliver a proportionate penalty in the criminal justice system without disproportionate collateral consequences. There must be some reasonable relief mechanism. It is not so much the existence of the consequence, but the lack of the ability of prosecutors and judges to control the whole range of restrictions and punishment imposed on an offender that is the

problem. As a prosecutor, you must comprehend this full range of consequences that flow from a crucial conviction. If not, we will suffer the disrespect and lose the confidence of the very society we seek to protect.

SO hopeful Note: If the National Association of District Attorneys can see that the laws are overbroad, and the punishments disproportionate, the collateral damage to the family is so great that they would issue such a strong statement, what are the lawmakers doing?

The lawmakers are pandering to the fear of parents (of which this writer is one). The most basic instinct of parents is to keep their children safe; it is the parents' primary responsibility, NOT the government's.

When the consequence for an action is so disproportionate to the action itself, all faith is lost in a system that no longer pursues justice but conviction and eternal sanction and stigma. This faith is lost not only by the former offender and their spouse, but by their parents, siblings, and most importantly their CHILDREN. The children of former offenders have zero faith in lawmakers (our entire system of government), law enforcement, the criminal justice system, in "victim advocates," prosecutors or social workers: anyone who says they are "here to help" who represents the government. They do not believe that anyone has their best interest at heart - especially after seeing the vengeance with which their family is destroyed, how their mother is treated for wanting to keep the family together, how they themselves are berated and degraded for still loving their family member. How their family member is treated, no matter how much progress they make, how much they have worked to rehabilitate and redeem themselves.

This loss of faith is not without deep and lasting consequence. This is the new generation of leaders, those who the lawmakers empty promise to "protect," but whose lives are demolished with wicked glee, who are tortured by the public and castigated by the news and tabloid television at every opportunity. All of this while the familiar and trite soundbyte is repeated ad nauseum, "It's for the children." Whose children?

This generation of former offenders' children is growing up with a deep, abiding resentment against and distrust of the criminal court system, law enforcement and our elected leaders who make the laws that are supposed to represent all of us. The truth is that they

represent everyone but former offenders and especially they do not represent the children of former offenders.

What will these children be like when they are young adults? Will they participate in our system of government and our society? Or, as we predict, since incarcerating their parent/sibling/other relative for 25 years-to-life (with a vengeful glee), will they find themselves incarcerated for life as well? It is well established that there is a dangerous "cycle of incarceration," so are we setting our country that already has a shameful record (1 in 10 Americans has or will spend time in jail or prison in their lives) on a course where everyone is either in prison or works in the prison industrial complex?

That seems to be the direction that we as a nation are heading. The passing of poorly-thought-out, knee-jerk "sound-byte" laws named after victims (which may or may not even be related to the bill itself, eAdvocate seems to be the only one checking) is growing exponentially, and our lawmakers are sinking further and further into the gutter. It is with no shame the politicians exploit the deaths of children to further their own careers; it is with no shame that they DESTROY MILLIONS OF CHILDRENS LIVES while spouting Orwellian phrases about the government's "first duty" to protect children, and that people lose all civil/constitutional rights and human dignity forever when they commit the most minor of infractions.

That is double-plus-ungood. We must heed the calls of those who prosecute (sometimes overzealously) - if they are worried about the harshness of our system and these new laws, that is a serious indication.

It's time to fix the system. Together we can do it. We are citizens, families and professionals working TOGETHER to reform the system. Please join us by clicking the "Register" link at the upper right hand corner.

Post



Everything Michigan

THE BAY CITY TIMES

Change Sex Offender Registry to stop punishing some adults for what they did as kids

Tuesday, August 15, 2006

By KAREN A. TIGHE

There is a growing acknowledgment that Michigan's Sex Offender Registry (SOR) needs another look, especially as it applies to juvenile offenders.

The registry was established with the idea of protecting the public. It was created in response to a few horrific high-profile crimes where children were abducted and sexually assaulted by strangers. The goal was to publicize the addresses of convicted sexual predators who, upon release from prison, might present a threat to public safety. After several years of operation, the results are mixed.

Many states are now revising their SOR laws in recognition that the inclusion of juveniles has resulted in over broad, punitive treatment that in some cases outweighs the benefits of public notification. A recent headline (Bay City Times, June 24), "New law gives sex offenders almost no place to live in Georgia," illustrates this point. There have been numerous press accounts recently that describe homelessness, joblessness, harassment and public ostracism toward young adults who have successfully completed treatment and are not a threat to the public.

Unfortunately, the list of offenders is now so large that its effectiveness is diluted. In Michigan alone, there are over 36,000 names on the Sex Offender Registry. The list becomes more unwieldy every year, since individuals must remain on the registry for 25 years after a conviction. No one currently registered is eligible to have his name removed until well past 2020.

While the law's intent was to identify predators who may abduct children, the truth is, abduction by strangers is a rare event. Federal Bureau of Justice Statistics show that nine out of 10 sexual assault crimes involve a family member or close acquaintance of the victim. When accessing the Michigan State Police SOR Web site, it is impossible to distinguish persons who continue to pose a public threat from those who have been rehabilitated.

While all individuals on the registry have committed a sexual offense, not all are "sexual predators" or "sexually deviant." This is especially true in the case of juveniles whose offense may have occurred as young as 10, but whose names go on the public registry when they become 18.

Most media outlets, including The Bay City Times, maintain a privacy policy that does not identify juvenile offenders or victims of sexual offenses by name. Similarly, while the Sex Offender Registry applies to juveniles, their names remain confidential until age 18. By that time, many juvenile offenders have completed treatment and do not pose a threat. But at age 18, their names must go on the public registry. This often impedes the ability of rehabilitated youth to find housing, maintain employment and reassimilate into society.

Unlike the adult system where crimes are punished by incarceration, the juvenile system hopes to rehabilitate. While some have called for harsher treatment of juveniles, by and large our society recognizes that, in the words of Desmond Tutu, "We must look on children in need not as problems but as individuals with potential." The juvenile court system does its best to re-parent children who have victimized others, and help them conform behavior to society's standards. There are reliable assessment tools that can differentiate the pathological from the incorrigible, and many juveniles respond readily to treatment. A few examples from the local caseload help illustrate this point.

One young man began his path to the SOR by being a teenaged Don Juan. His sexual conquests resulted in pregnancy for two girls at his high school. Although he was 16, both girls were 15, which is below the legal age of consent in Michigan. When their pregnancies became public, the young man was referred for

prosecution. He is not a predator. He is not a rapist. He is not a threat to young children. He is now a father, and when he was released from juvenile court, he was still dating the mother of one of the babies. He will be on the Sex Offender Registry until he is 41 years old.

Another young man's path toward the registry started through no fault of his own, when he was a little boy. He is one of the children the registry was designed to protect - he was abused by a convicted sex offender, his father. After this trauma, he was placed with a loving foster family. Children are the greatest imitators in the world. At age 13, this boy acted out inappropriate sexual behaviors he had learned, on another child at home. He was prosecuted for criminal sexual conduct and pled guilty. The court assumed his care, and he was sent to residential placement. He was given years of intense therapy. When he turned 18, confidentiality no longer applied. Suddenly, his name and picture appeared on the public registry. His classmates used this information to ostracize him when he registered (as required) as a sex offender with the campus police.

Due to a glitch when he was released from court wardship, his address was incorrectly reported. The prosecutor issued a warrant for failure to register as a sex offender, which is a felony. A state trooper was dispatched to transport this young man from his foster home in the Upper Peninsula to the Bay County Jail. After learning the background, the district court dismissed this charge. But upon his release from jail, the young man was stranded 300 miles from home, with no money and no transportation. Court employees bought him lunch and a bus ticket back to the north. It has been almost nine years since his offense occurred. There has been no repeat behavior. This young man will continue to be registered as a sex offender until he is 38 years old.

Finally, a 23-year-old man came into court recently to seek expungement of his juvenile record. His offense happened when he was 12, with a younger child. Today, he presents a compelling picture of a person who has done everything in his power to atone for his youthful crime. He was accompanied to court by his wife and his pastor. He brought in copies of his college grades and references from teachers. He was proud of his job. He satisfied the court that his juvenile record could be destroyed. Yet, he must remain on the registry until he is 37.

The state police Web site carries a disclaimer that the SOR should not be used for harassment. However, this young man was summarily fired when a co-worker showed his boss the information on the registry.

What the Sexual Offender Registry does not reveal is that many juveniles successfully complete sexual-offender treatment. They learn to identify their own abuse cycle and the things that trigger flashbacks. They learn to avoid pornography and sexually explicit material. They learn to protect themselves from false accusations by avoiding unsupervised contact with persons who might accuse them.

The Michigan Probate Judges Association has urged the Legislature to consider revising MCL 28.721 to provide for the use of discretion in requiring juvenile offenders to remain on the registry for 25 years. Some revisions adopted by other states include: allowing a prosecutor to file a petition where they believe public notification is required; requiring a court to hold a hearing at age 21 to determine whether a juvenile should be registered as an adult; and allowing a juvenile to file a petition requesting the court to determine whether the interests of the public require future notification.

The Sex Offender Registry is an excellent tool to allow victims to track the whereabouts of the person who committed a crime against them. But if the general public makes assumption about registrants without knowing the details, the SOR can become a tool of retribution beyond what the law envisioned.

- Karen A. Tighe, a Bay City resident, is the Bay County Probate Court and Family Court judge.

Recognizing Healthy & Unhealthy Sexual Development in Children
Recognizing Healthy & Unhealthy Sexual Development in Children
by Phil Rich, Ed.D., MSW

In an age when childhood sexual abuse and victimization is increasingly on our minds, it is important for parents (and other caretakers) to understand what is "normal" sexual development and behavior in children and teenagers, and which behaviors might signal that a child is a victim of sexual abuse, or acting in a sexually aggressive manner towards others.

In fact, sexual development and sexual play are natural and healthy processes in children, from toddlers through childhood and into adolescence. For infants and toddlers, this usually involves body sensations, cuddling and touch, and playing with toys. Even in the earliest of days, babies and toddlers touch and rub their own genitals, and even as infants boys experience erections. By early school age (5-7), children are interested in body parts and functions. Some sexual play may begin, and concepts of love and affection begin to develop, evolving into behaviors and questions that continue developing into later childhood (8-9 years old).

Pre-adolescent children (ages 10-12) are more focused on social relationships and expectations, and begin to experience clearer sexual feelings. Children touch, fondle, and rub their own genitals throughout childhood, but they begin to more clearly masturbate during this time, developing clearer patterns into and beyond puberty (ages 12/13 and up). By puberty and adolescence, body parts and sexual organs are clearly developing, and puberty brings the onset of menstruation in girls and more routine masturbation for both boys and girls, and especially boys. As children move deeper into adolescence, romance, intimacy, and sexual issues are driven by and blend with physical feelings, emotions, and social expectations. Dating and more intense sexual relationships begin and deepen, moving from thinking about and discussing romances, to dating, kissing, sexual petting, and, in many cases, sexual relationships and intercourse.

But it is important to distinguish between age appropriate and age inappropriate sexual behaviors. Many children engage in sexual behaviors and show sexual interests throughout their entire childhood, even though they have not yet reached puberty. However, normative (or expected) sexual behaviors are usually not overtly sexual, are more exploratory and playful in nature, do not show a preoccupation with sexual interactions, and are not hostile, aggressive, or hurtful to self or others.

Appropriate and Inappropriate Childhood Sexuality

Like other areas of growth, children's sexual behavior develops over time, and many behaviors are normal for children at certain ages. On the other hand, there are sexual behaviors about which we should be concerned, are worrisome, and should not be ignored or seen as child's play. Other sexual behaviors are more serious and may be dangerous to the child and others. Nevertheless, when a child engages in sexual behaviors, it can be

difficult to decide when the behavior is natural and healthy, and when it may reflect a problem or disturbance.

The normative behaviors of childhood and adolescence are of concern when they are extensive or suggest preoccupation, or involve others in ways that are not consensual. That is, sexual behaviors in children present a special concern when they appear as prominent features in a child's life, or when sexual play or behaviors are not welcomed by other children involved in the play. This is the point at which sexually harmful and aggressive behaviors most closely and clearly hinges.

Sexually Reactive Children

"Sexually Reactive" children are pre-pubescent boys and girls who have been exposed to, or had contact with, inappropriate sexual activities. The sexually reactive child may engage in a variety of age-inappropriate sexual behaviors as a result of his or her own exposure to sexual experiences, and may begin to act out, or engage in, sexual behaviors or relationships that include excessive sexual play, inappropriate sexual comments or gestures, mutual sexual activity with other children, or sexual molestation and abuse of other children.

Inappropriate Sexual Exposure

For children aged below 11, we consider all forms of sexual exposure inappropriate, and especially for children aged 10 and younger. This includes:

- * all forms of sexual activity with adolescents and adults
- * viewing pornography or other sexually explicit material
- * witnessing sexual behaviors between adults, adolescents, or other children
- * excessive sexual play with a same age or older child who has more sophisticated sexual knowledge
- * any situation in which a child is exposed to explicit sexual materials outside of an educational experience taught by qualified staff

Inappropriate Sexual Behaviors

Sexually reactive children may react to their exposure to sexual activities by:

- * demonstrating precocious sexualized activities, gestures, language, and knowledge
- * engaging in extensive mutual sexual play with same age or younger children
- * engaging in excessive masturbation or demonstrating a preoccupation with sexual activities and ideas
- * engaging in sexual behaviors in public, such as sexual exposure, rubbing, or masturbation

- * interest in or attempting sexual contact with older children, adolescents, adults, or animals
- * engaging in or attempting significant sexual encounters with same age or younger children, including masturbation, oral sex, digital penetration, and intercourse
- * sexually molesting other, and especially younger, children

Signs of Sexual Disturbance

Toni Cavanagh Johnson, a psychologist specializing in childhood sexual development, lists signs of concern in children up to the age of about 12:

- * Children should not be preoccupied with sexual play, and should engage in many other forms of play
- * Children should not engage in sexual play with much younger or much older children
- * Children should not have precocious knowledge of sex beyond their age
- * Children's sexual behaviors and interests should be similar to those of other same-age children
- * Children should not be "driven" to engage in sexual activities, and be able to stop when told to by an adult
- * Children's sexual play should not lead to complaints from or have a negative effect on other children, and should not cause physical or emotional discomfort to themselves or others
- * Children should not sexualize relationships, or see others as objects for sexual interactions
- * Children aged 4 and older should understand the rights and boundaries of other children in sexual play
- * Children should not experience fear, shame, or guilt in their sexual play
- * Children should not engage in adult-type sexual activities with other children
- * Children should not direct sexual behaviors toward older adolescents or adults
- * Children should not engage in sexual activities with animals
- * Children should not use sex to hurt others
- * Children should not use bribery, threats, or force to engage other children in sexual play

There are many excellent books and other publications that explain and discuss healthy sexual development in children and adolescents. Parents who have questions about sexual behavior in children should take the time to learn about sexual development in their child, and be aware of the possibility of sexual difficulties.

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